

The Warham Williams House  
Northford, Connecticut

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of Connecticut

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Harold H. Davis, District Officer  
29 Whitney Ave., New Haven, Conn.

## THE WARHAM WILLIAMS HOUSE

Northford, New Haven. County, Conn.

Owner: St. Andrews Episcopal Church, Northford, Conn.

Date of Erection: 1750

Architect or Builder: Warham Williams

Present Condition: Fair

Number of Stories: Two and One-half

Materials of Construction: Stone foundation  
Clapboard sidewalls  
Brick chimneys  
Shingled Roof  
Plank floors  
Timbers throughout hand hewed

Other Existing Records: Old Houses of Connecticut,  
Colonial Dames of America.  
History of New Haven County,  
J. C. Rookney, pg. 93.  
New Haven & New Haven County,  
Everitt Hill, Vol. 1, pg. 419.

## List of Photographs:

1. Front Elevation (West)
2. Northeast Elevation
3. Detail of Entrance
4. Detail of Window-West Side
5. Interior Detail of Entrance Door
6. Detail Entrance Stairs
7. Door-South Wall of Southwest Room
8. Cupboard-Northwest Room
9. Detail of Fireplace Showing Tiles-N.W. Room
10. Northwest Walls of Old Kitchen
11. South Wall-Northwest Room-Second Floor
12. Detail of Attic Framing

THE WARHAM WILLIAMS HOUSE  
NORTHFORD - CONNECTICUT

On the eastern side of the Middletown Turnpike, in the town of Northford, some distance back from the road, stands the house built in 1750 by the Rev. Warham Williams, the first pastor of the Congregational Church in Northford. In 1866 the house was sold to St. Andrew's Parish for \$1475 and since that time has been the rectory of the Episcopal church.

Entered on the inside of a cupboard door in one of the bed rooms is a record of the various times at which the house has been painted, from Oct. 2, 1792 when "This house was painted by E. Jones" to December, 1900, when the laconic item appears, "Painted by R. Bunnell."

It is a two and one half story, frame house with a plain pitch roof, while the roof of the ell is of gambrel design. In the main entrance pilasters support its pediment, which is broken and in the form of a scroll, terminating in a carved rosette on either side. The inside framing is exposed with posts cased. There are six fireplaces in this interesting house, and the mantels all have hand carved moldings. There are also several cupboards throughout the house that should be noted for their individuality. This house, shaded in the front by fine old maples and with well kept gardens on each side, is one of the most picturesque in the Town of Northford.

As the parsonage of the Reverend Warham Williams it holds many incidents of interest, for besides being the beloved pastor of his congregation, he had widespread interests and influence throughout the Colony. He was a descendant of the Williams' of Weathersfield and Lebanon. His grandfather, the Rev. John Williams, was the victim of the famous Indian raid, in which he was taken prisoner and transported from Deerfield, Massachusetts, to Canada. Before going to Northford he served as a tutor at Yale College, and in 1769 was elected a member of the corporation, holding that position to which were added the duties of secretary for six years, until his death in 1788. During the stormy days of the Revolutionary War he was entrusted by Yale College with the custody of its library and scientific apparatus.

Mr. Williams' successor at the Northford parsonage was the Reverend Matthew Noyes who was ordained in 1790, and was reputed to be the wealthiest clergyman in the State, and he equipped the house with comforts not found in many of the ordinary houses.

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Author:

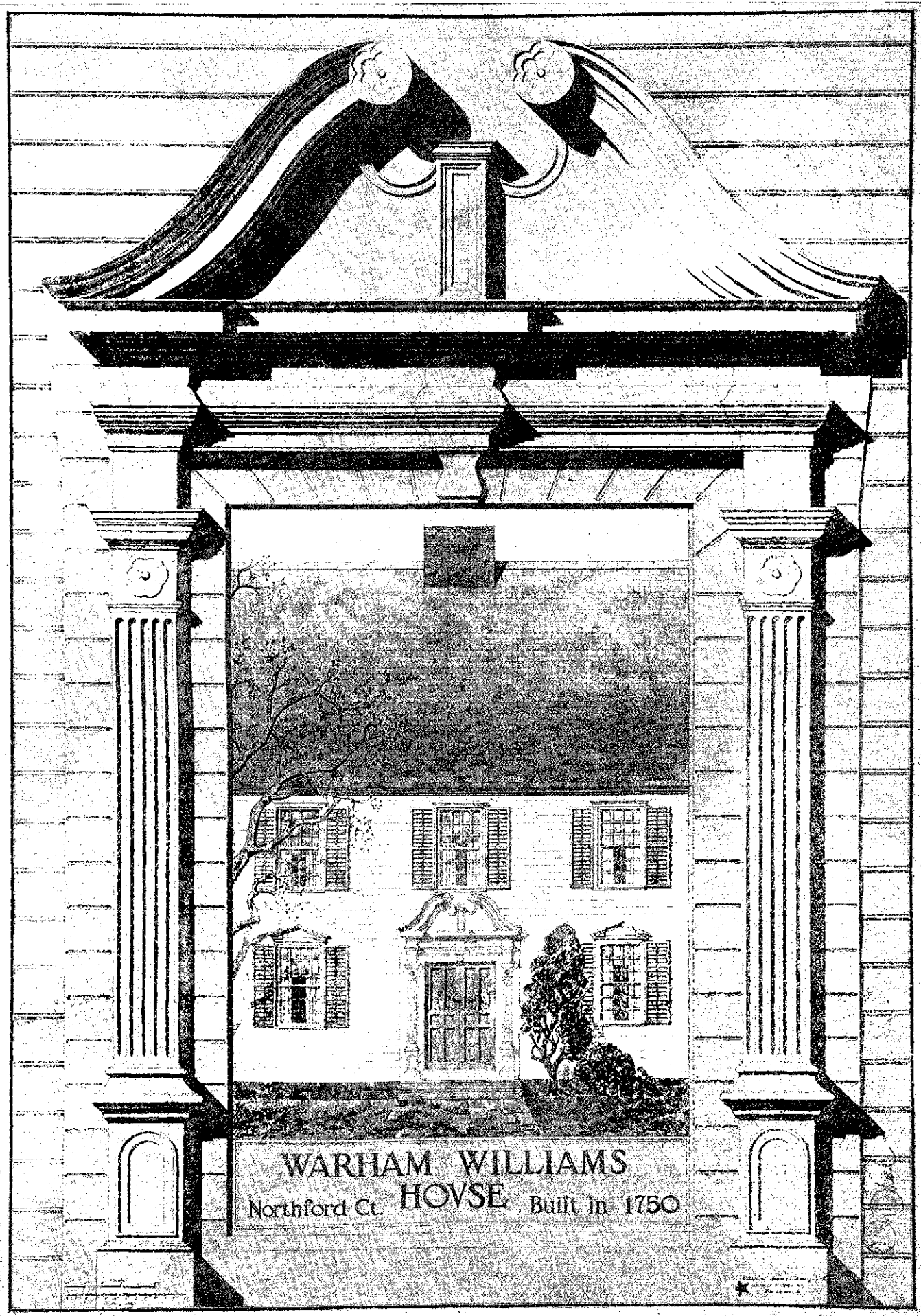
*John F. Flanagan*

Approved:

*Harold N. Davis · Feb. 27 - 1939*

*revised June 1939 - JFD -*

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Study, Archacology IV Measured Drawing, Beaux-Arts Institute of Design  
Second Medal, S. F. Jeter, Jr., Yale University

time that here was the cue for modern residential types in this vicinity. But a search did not reveal a single modern house that capitalized upon this interesting and logical folk-expression. Thus our modern designers, men who are supposed to think, miss the whole point of the "background" considerations, which apparently the unlettered pioneers grasp almost unconsciously.

But what are the "background" considerations that should predetermine and have, under normal conditions, from time immemorial, predetermined our expressions, architectural or otherwise? A simple analysis will immediately indicate the principal ones. They are: (a) *climate*, (b) *geologic background*, including considerations of terrain and the materials at hand, (c) *historic significances*, (d) *ethnic relationships* and (e) *social and economic conditions*. I wonder how many architects, sitting down to make their preliminary sketches, really study or even make a survey of the above-named influencing conditions. Usually the performance degenerates into a compliance with the utilitarian requirements laid down by the owner and the "dressing up" of the structure in a form that is interesting or pleasant to the designer and which is, in too many cases, predetermined by the school at which the man studied, the office in which he got his training, the country in which he sketched, or even the pure accident of the "books" with which he is familiar.

This thoughtless and artificial "attack" of the problems of architecture is bound to result in insincere and meaningless creations and this in spite of the fact that the building may be perfectly proper and grammatical as to style and fulfill all the tests of beauty of line, form and color. However handsome may be the sealskin coat of the Eskimo, it would have little meaning upon some belle of the Congo in Africa. Yet one sees in America every day residential and other types that are as appropriate to their situations and the use made of them as palm trees would be along Fifth Avenue.

It would seem that seeking "freedom" we have achieved license and have thrown over board all those laws and procedures which a study of historic architecture down through the ages should have taught us. What, indeed, is the meaning of history? Moreover, how strange it is that often the very tests we would make of the performances of our fellows, we throw to the winds when we sit down to the board ourselves. It has not been long since one of our American architects declared that "When logic enters, art flies out of the window". Is this indeed really to be the attitude?

Someone has pointed out that the great art of the past was never conscious of its whitherward. This

may have been true but alas, it cannot be true today. In a synthetic age it would seem that art, like everything else must be conscious of its ends, its aims. *WE KNOW TOO MUCH* to be unconscious of the trends, and today we do *not* build our art by piecing on to what our "master" taught us. The whole world of expression is open to us and it would seem that, gazing intently at the myriad expressions of it, we have forgotten the great meanings, the significances behind it all. *I think we need a compass.*

We have achieved a certain unity of purpose in America, a unity politically, socially and economically and this has resulted in a *normal* unity of architectural expression. One has constantly borne home to him the fact that, no matter in what part of the country he encounters American architectural art, be it in frugal New England or sunny California, there is, after all, running through all this work, divergent as it may be in style and character, a certain feeling that indelibly stamps it as American. *This spirit is normal and logical* and in no wise resultant of the indiscriminate copying of ideas and forms of which I spoke earlier in this discussion. But while this "family resemblance" is to be expected there *can* never and *will* never be (unless the unnatural, parrot-like copying complained of above prevails) any general, blanket American style the characteristics of which will remain equally good for Maine and California, Minnesota and Florida. The contributing conditions to architectural expression in our land are too varied to permit this. Therefore, instead of trying artificially to make every American city and town like every other, would it not be more logical to permit each locality to work out as naturally and beautifully as possible its own architectural expression?

But how is this to be accomplished? Simply in this wise: by never forcing into any community a building that does not meet the tests of utility, appropriateness and beauty, both of function and of form. Thoughtless architecture, like thoughtless poetry, is of little meaning and few of us would care to be authors of structures so denominated. Yet thoughtless architecture is bound to result unless the creator carefully and thoroughly studies his "background" material. Thoughtful, beautiful art does not arrive by pushing a pencil glibly over cameo paper. It results from study, the attempt to make the building not only beautiful in form and logical in function but reflective of its terrain—constructed of materials indigenous to the locality—appropriate to its climatic background and its floral associates, expressive of its day and time and above all carrying a measure of the personality, the idealism, of its creator.

The foregoing remarks are not designed to produce the impression that nothing fulfilling these high